

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 20 June 2024

Ending the Use of Fossil-Fuel Powered Leaf Blowers

Executive/routine
Wards

Routine
All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Transport and Environment Committee is asked to note:
 - 1.1.1 The intention to procure electric leaf blowers over the course of 2024/25 and to remove all petrol fuelled leaf blowers from use;
 - 1.1.2 That all future specifications for contracts for services where leaf blowers will be required will require contractors to operate electric versions and not to use fossil-fuelled versions; and
 - 1.1.3 That there is currently no legal power which would allow the Council to ban the use of fossil-fuelled leaf blowers across the city.

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Ending the Use of Fossil-Fuel Powered Leaf Blowers

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report outlines the Council's intention to replace all of its petrol fuelled leaf blowers and its approach to third parties who deliver services, using leaf blowers, on behalf of the Council.

3. Background

- 3.1 On 13 December 2023, Culture and Communities Committee approved an [amended motion](#) by Councillor Staniforth on ending the use of fossil-fuel powered leaf blowers and agreed to bring a further report
- 3.1.1 The Council ending its own use of fossil-fuel powered leaf blowers.
 - 3.1.2 The council ensuring its contractors do not use fossil-fuel leaf blowers.
 - 3.1.3 Investigates the feasibility of switching to electric leaf blowers.
 - 3.1.4 The council banning or regulating the use of fossil-fuel blowers withing the city of Edinburgh.
- 3.2 The Council's [Emissions Reduction Plan](#) (CERP) outlines the target to replace half of Council owned and operated small equipment/ hand machinery, including 'leaf-blowers', with non-fossil fuel alternatives).

4. Main report

- 4.1 The Council currently operates 69 leaf blowers of which 54 are petrol-powered and 15 of which are electric (there are seven units allocated to street cleansing, six in parks and two in bereavement services).
- 4.2 These tools are used seasonally to clear leaves from the city's streets, parks and green spaces and, on average, they are operated for 10 hours a week for two - three months of the year.
- 4.3 Over the past three years, as electric leaf blowers have been introduced they have been positively received by operators.

- 4.4 As well as cheaper running costs, the electric leaf blowers have additional health and safety benefits for the operators including significant noise reduction. They also cause less nuisance to the public. Electric blowers emit no harmful fumes and are lightweight in design therefore less heavy for operators to carry.
- 4.5 Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) and whole body vibration are significant risks for operators of petrol blowers. The electric blowers currently operated emit vibration so minimal that the risk is almost considered negligible allowing longer periods of operation.
- 4.6 On this basis, the Council will now replace all the current petrol leaf blowers with electric versions. It is anticipated that these replacements will be procured by the end of financial year 2024/25.
- 4.7 A number of contractors working on behalf of the Council also currently utilise fossil fuel leaf blowers. To bring this to an end, all tender specifications will be amended to ensure contractors are only able to use electric leaf blowers.
- 4.8 Fossil-fuel leaf blowers will be used across the city by other parties (including residents). However, there is currently no legal basis by which the Council can ban these activities.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Electric leaf blowers will be purchased to replace the petrol leaf blowers during financial year 2024/25.
- 5.2 All contracts where leaf blowers are used will be identified and specifications and amended ahead of contracts being renewed.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The cost to replace all of the petrol leaf blowers used by the Council with electric versions will be in the region of £143,000 (quote received January 2024). Electric alternatives for small equipment have a 50% higher upfront cost and have lower running costs. There are also opportunities to share battery chargers with other electrical items such as electric mowers.
- 6.2 The replacement of the petrol leaf blowers for electric versions will be funded by contributions from the Shared Prosperity Fund, Net Zero community budget and the funding allocated for biodiversity equipment in parks in February budget agreement.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 There are no equality and poverty impacts arising from this report.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 This investment will positively contribute towards the Council's CERP targets and the Council's [Air Quality Action Plan](#).

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 There are no risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impacts arising from this report.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 None

11. Appendices

None.